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ABSTRACT

An overview of the educational and language status of Hispanic American children is presented using data from a variety of sources. The following topics are reported on: (1) enrollment in private and public schools and by age category; (2) delayed education (enrollment two years or more below expected grade level) by language characteristics and ethnic subgroup; (3) high school completion for Hispanics versus non-Hispanics; (4) high school dropouts in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, compared with whites; (5) high school noncompletion, by language background; (6) functional illiteracy, in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and by ethnic subgroup; (7) occupational aspiration by comparison with whites and blacks; (8) parental, counselor, and student expectations for postsecondary education, by comparison with whites and blacks and by ethnic subgroup; (9) type of postsecondary education sought; and (10) language characteristics of the population, including numbers of language minority persons, limited English proficient children, and services available to limited English proficient children. Problems in data collection on language characteristics are outlined. (MSE)

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THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HISPANIC AMERICAN CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of obstacles which emerge in attempting to compile an educational overview on Hispanic American children. The most prevalent and most troubling is the fact many key pieces of information are simply unavailable. Although most surveys and studies disaggregate data by race, not all do so by ethnicity. This results in the inclusion of Hispanics in either the White or Black racial categories, with no separately reported information for Hispanics. Few sources also realize the differences which can occur within the category of "Hispanic" among the various Hispanic sub-groups. Consequently, little data is reported separately for Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexican Americans, etc. There is very little data available for certain sub-populations of Hispanics, most especially for undocumented workers, migrants or the limited English speaking. With regard to information about limited English proficient Hispanics, data collection has been plagued by the wide variety of definitions of what constitutes a limited English proficient child and how that proficiency is to be assessed. Although several recent national surveys contain good samples of Hispanics and have reported data by ethnicity, there are still many instances where data available for Blacks and Whites is simply not available for Hispanics.

This overview consists of information from a variety of sources, in an attempt to piece together a comprehensive sketch of the educational status of Hispanic children. Information used is the most recent and reliable available.

I. ENROLLMENT

A. Public vs. Private Schools

- Approximately 90 percent of Hispanic students are enrolled in public schools.[1]

- At the elementary and secondary level, 80.3 percent of Hispanic students are enrolled in public schools as compared to 70.9 percent of White students.[2]

- Of those attending private schools, more than 88 percent are enrolled in religiously affiliated schools.[3]

B. Enrollment by Age Category

- Hispanics are less likely to be enrolled in pre-school and kindergarten programs than are Whites. Only 56.7 percent of Hispanic children ages 3-6 are enrolled in school compared to 64.6 percent of White children.[4]

- At each grade level there is a larger percentage of Hispanic children enrolled below grade-level than White children. This especially true for Hispanic youth aged 14-20.[5]

- Approximately ten percent of Hispanic children aged 8-13 and about 25 percent of those aged 14-20 are enrolled two years or more below expected grade level.[6]

- Likelihood of being enrolled below grade level increases if children come from large families, or families with low-incomes. Being born outside of the United States, speaking a non-English language and having parents with low educational attainment also contributes to the likelihood of being behind in school.

- Four of five Hispanics live in households where Spanish is sometimes or usually spoken. Among Hispanic children 8-13 years old living in homes where Spanish is spoken, one-tenth were enrolled below the expected grade level for their age. For 14-20 year olds, one of four was behind in school.[7] (see Chart 1)

1

CHART 1

DELAYED EDUCATION BY LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS

Percent of Hispanic and White students aged 8-20 enrolled two years or more below expected grade level, by language characteristics: Spring 1976

Language Characteristics	Percent enrolled below expected grade level			
	8 to 13 year olds		14 to 20 year olds	
	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic
Mono-English language background[2].....	*	5	15	9
Non-English language background[3].....	10	7	25	10
Speak only English themselves[4]....	*	*	20	10
Speak a non-English language themselves[5]	12	8	27	13
Not reported.....	*	*	*	*

*Percent not shown where the estimate is less than 20,000 persons.

1 Below expected grade level for age is defined as: 8 years or older and enrolled in the first grade, 9 years old or older and enrolled in the second grade, etc. Also included were 20 years olds who were enrolled in the first year of college.
2 English is the only language spoken in the household currently.
3 A language other than English is sometimes or usually spoken in the household currently.
4 The child speaks only English.
5 The child sometimes or usually speaks a language other than English.

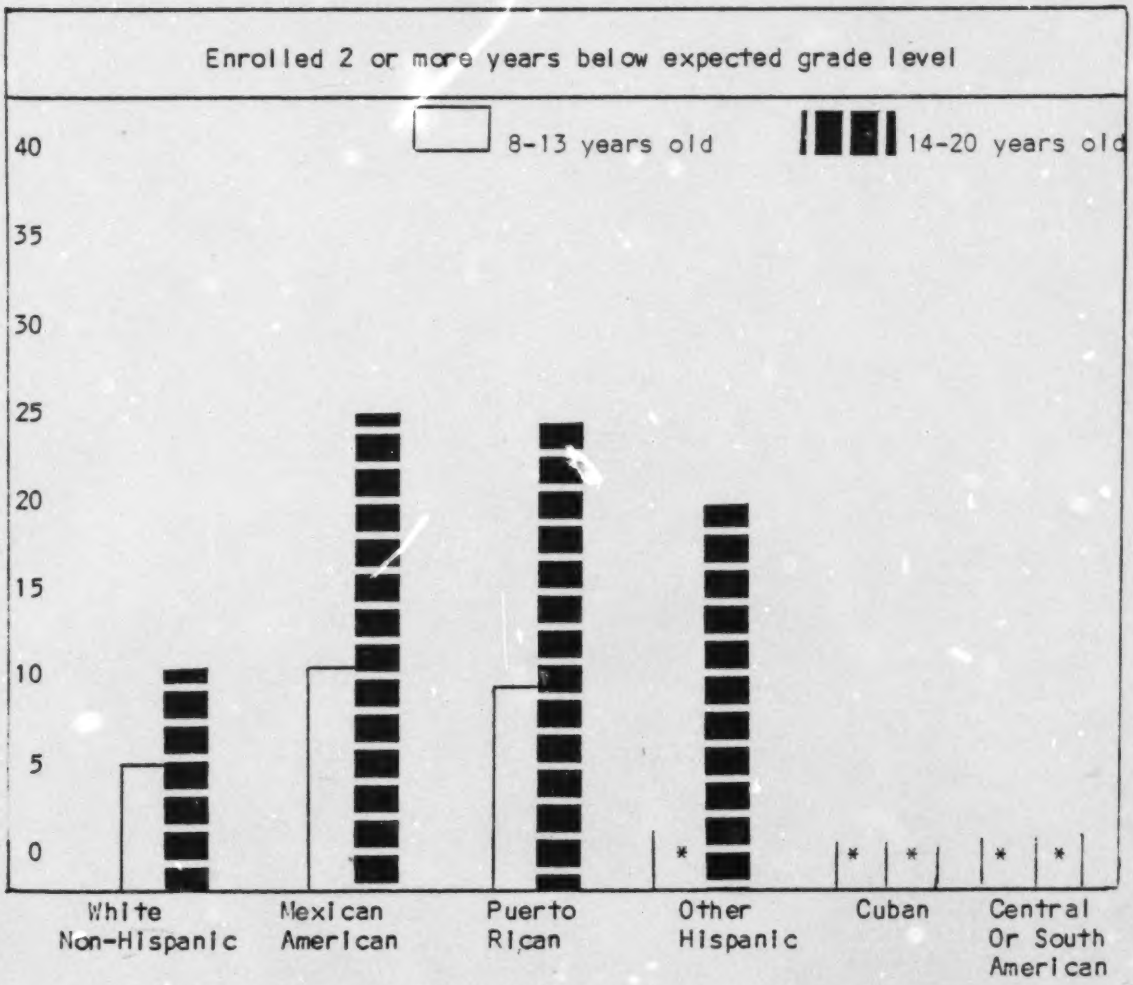
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, Survey of Income and Education, Spring 1976, special tabulations.

- Various studies have disclosed that Mexican American students fell progressively further behind as they continue in school, with regularly decreasing achievement after the early grades.[8]

- Enrollment below grade level also varies by Hispanic subgroup. Puerto Rican and Mexican American youth are more likely to be enrolled two or more years below grade level than are other Hispanic youth (see Chart 2).

CHART 2

DELAYED EDUCATION, BY HISPANIC SUBGROUP



*Percent not shown where estimate is less than 20,000 persons.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Survey of Income and Education, Spring 1976; The Condition of Education of Hispanic Americans, 1980.

II. High School Completion

A. Schooling Completed

- Hispanics are the least educated minority in the United States; the median number of school years completed by Hispanics 25 and over is 10.3 years, as compared with 11.9 years for Blacks and 12.5 years for Whites.[9]

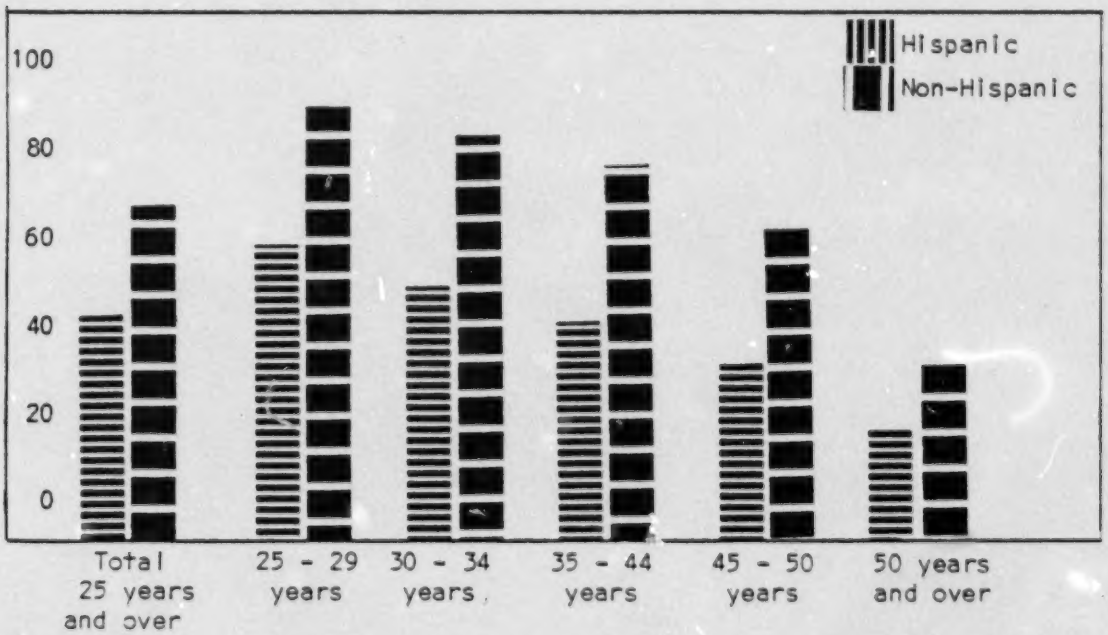
- Only about 42 percent of Hispanics 25 years old and over have completed high school as compared to 70.3 percent of Whites.[10]

- Of non-metro Hispanics 25 years old and over, only 35.5 percent have completed four years of high school or more as compared to 63 percent of non-metro Whites.[11]

- At all age levels, high school completion rates are appreciably lower for Hispanics than for non-Hispanics. (see Chart 3)

CHART 3

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION FOR HISPANICS AND NON-HISPANICS



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Persons of Spanish Origin in the U.S.: March 1978, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 339, 1979.

- For migrant farmworkers the educational situation is even worse. One in five migrant farmworkers over 30 has never been in a classroom; the average educational attainment for Hispanic farmworkers 25 and over is 5.4 years.[12]

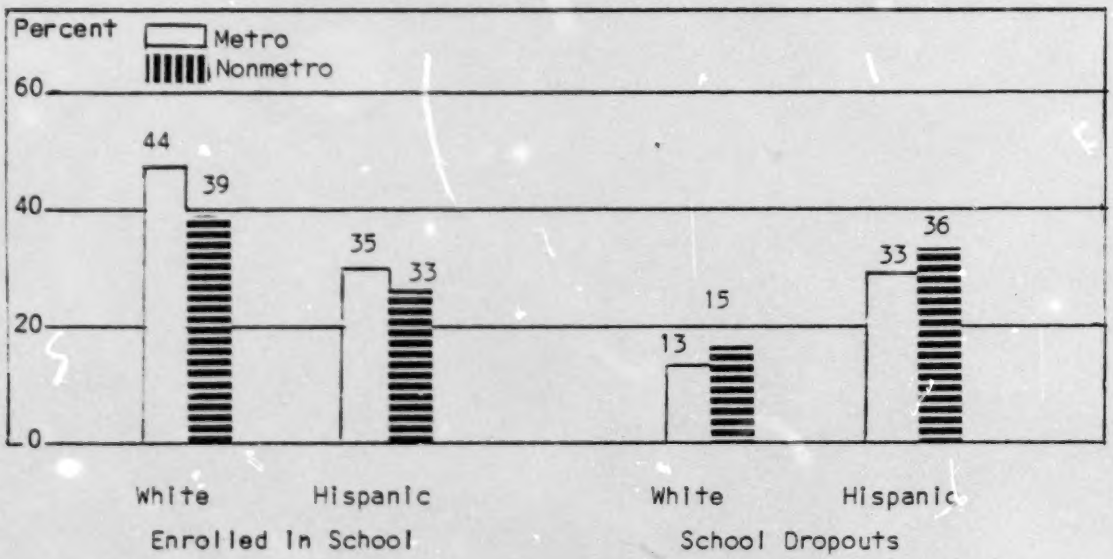
B. Drop-Outs

- Of Hispanic youth 16-24 years old, 33.3 percent have dropped out of high school as compared to 13.4 percent of White youth.

- Of non-metro Hispanic youth 16-24 years old, 36 percent are high school drop-outs as compared to 15 percent of non-metro White youth.[13] (see Chart4)

CHART 4

PERCENTAGE OF METRO AND NON-METRO 16-24 YEAR OLDS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DROPOUTS, BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 1978



Dropouts are defined as those persons not enrolled in school and not high school graduates:

SOURCE: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 347, "Persons of Spanish Origin in the U.S.: March 1979 (Advance Report), 1979.

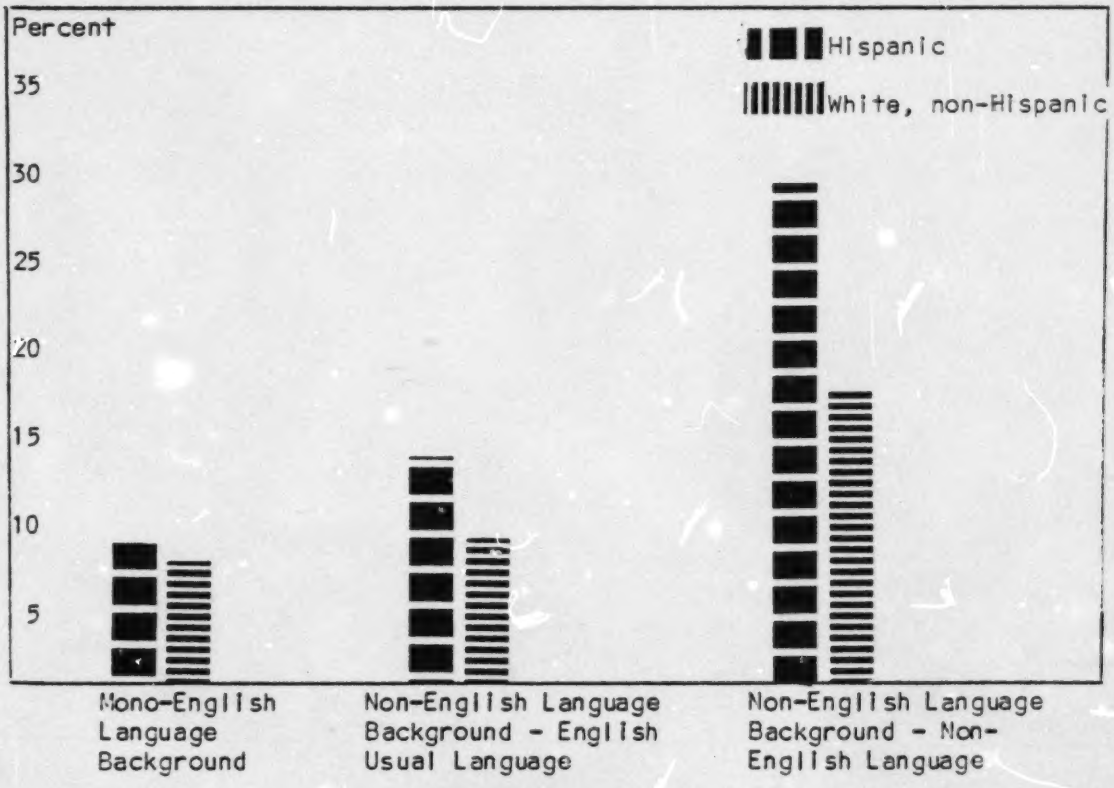
- 38.2 percent of Hispanics 18-19 years old are dropouts and 14.1 percent of Hispanics 16-17 year olds are out of school and have not graduated as compared to 15.6 percent of White youth 18-19 and 9.1 percent of White youth 16-17 years old.[14]

- Language background is related to high school completion. Hispanics with a mono-English background were almost as likely to complete high school as Whites.

- Hispanics with a non-English background, whether or not they usually speak Spanish, are more likely than Whites to dropout of school. (see Chart 5)

CHART 5

HIGH SCHOOL NONCOMPLETION, BY LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND LANGUAGE USAGE



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, Survey of Income and Education, Spring 1976, Special Tabulations.

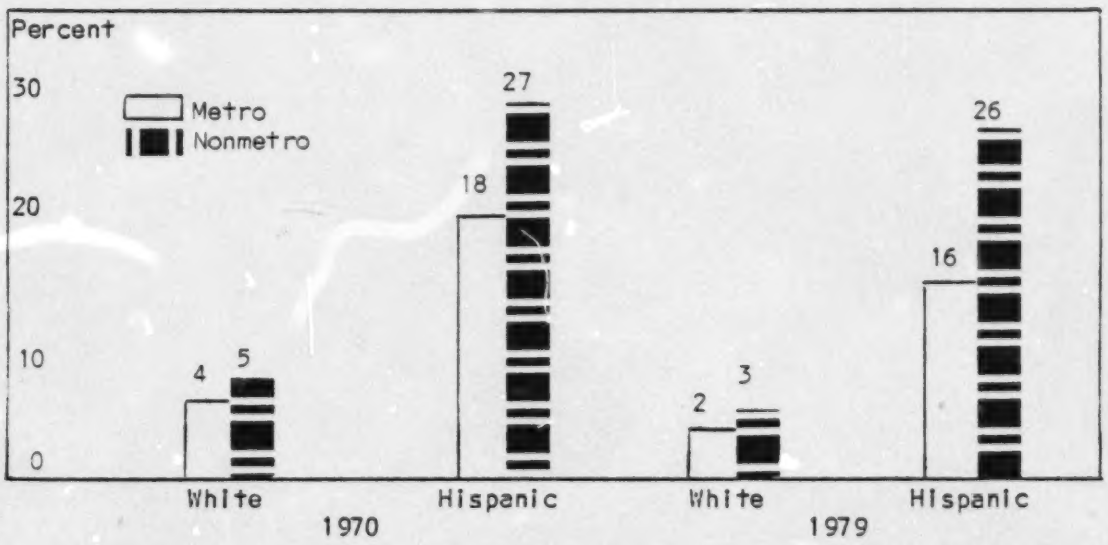
III. Functional Illiteracy

- Functional illiteracy is conventionally defined as the failure to complete more than five years of elementary school.

- Hispanics are more likely than Whites to be classified as functionally illiterate. In 1979, 17.8 percent of Hispanics 25 years old and over had completed less than five years of elementary school as compared to 2.8 percent of Whites. Non-metro Hispanics have an especially high rate of illiteracy (26 percent as compared to 3 percent for non-metro Whites).[15] (see Chart 6)

CHART 6

PERCENTAGE OF METRO AND NON-METRO FUNCTIONAL ILLITERATES, BY RACE/ETHNICITY



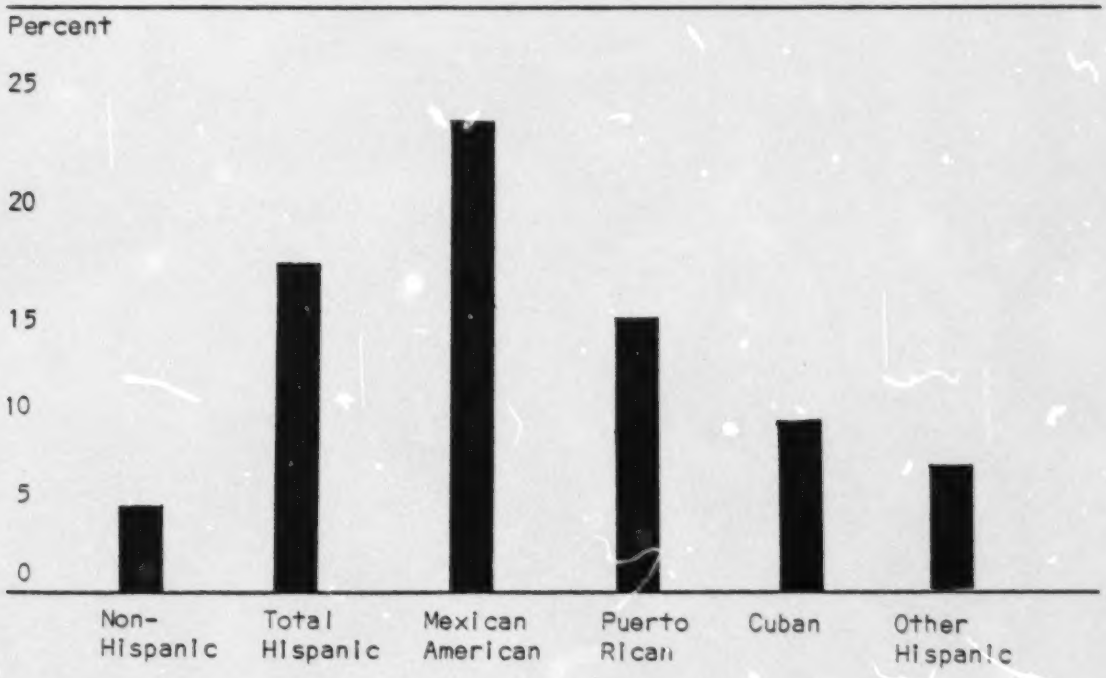
Functional illiterates are defined as those persons 25 years old and over who have completed less than 5 years of school.

SOURCE: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 356, "Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1979 and 1978," 1980.

By Hispanic subgroup, Mexican Americans have the highest rate of functional illiteracy (23.1 percent), followed by Puerto Ricans (15 percent), Cubans (9.3 percent) and other Hispanics (5.9 percent) (see Chart 7).16

CHART 7

FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY BY HISPANIC SUBGROUP



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: March 1978, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 339, 1979.

IV. ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

A. Occupational Aspirations

Occupational aspirations do not appear to be much different for Hispanic, Black, and White high school seniors. A similar percentage of Black, White and Hispanic students responding to questions for the survey High School and Beyond, Study,[17] indicated career aspirations requiring college preparation, (professional and advanced professional). 34.4 percent of Hispanics, 38.9 percent of Blacks and 39.3 percent of Whites indicated occupational aspirations which require college education. (see Chart 8)

CHART 8

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AT AGE 30

Occupation	% of Hispanic Students	% of Black Students	% of White Students
Clerical	12.3	12.3	9.2
Craftsman	8.9	5.9	8.5
Farmer	2.2	.5	2.2
Homemaker	2.0	1.2	3.2
Laborer	1.9	1.1	2.2
Manager, Admin.	5.1	8.2	6.9
Military	2.8	4.3	1.6
Operative	4.2	2.7	2.6
Professional I	22.7	27.3	26.7
Professional II (Adv.)	11.7	11.6	12.6
Proprietor - Owner	3.5	3.0	4.1
Protective Services	2.5	1.0	1.8
Sales	2.0	2.4	2.1
School Teacher	3.9	2.9	4.1
Service	3.8	3.7	3.5
Technical	8.8	10.0	7.8
Not Working	0.1	0.2	1.0

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics', "High School and Beyond" - Done for the National Center for Education Statistics by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, 1980.

B. Expectations

1. Parental Expectations

- Both Hispanic and White students perceive that their parents expect them to go on to college more often than do their counsellors or teachers.

- Hispanic, Black and White youth all perceive that about the same percentage of their mothers expect them to go to college.

  .. only 43.2 percent of Hispanic students said that their mothers not only want them to go to college but want them to get a college degree or more. 56 percent of Black youth, and 48.9 percent of White youth feel that their mothers have this expectation.

2. Counsellors' Expectations

- Although Hispanic students were more likely to report that their counsellors influenced them than were White students, only 47.2 percent of Hispanic seniors felt that their counsellors expect them to go to college.

3. Students' Expectations

- When students were asked to indicate how much education they actually expected that they'd get, only 36 percent of Hispanic students actually thought they would get a college degree or more, compared with 41.5 percent of Black students, and 45.6 percent of White students.18 (see Chart 9)

CHART 9

SCHOOLING YOU THINK YOU'LL GET

Level	% of Hispanic	% of Blacks	% of Whites
Below High School	1.0	0.7	0.3
High School Graduate	24.0	16.3	19.7
Voc. Ed. Less than 2 years	8.2	7.0	8.3
Voc. Ed. More than 2 years	13.1	14.5	10.9
College, Less than 2 years	4.4	2.5	2.6
College 2 years +	13.4	11.5	12.5
College Graduate	19.2	24.3	26.0
Master's	9.0	11.9	11.2
Ph.D., MD or Adv. Degree	7.8	11.3	8.4

SOURCE: High School and Beyond, 1980.

- Only 36 percent of Hispanics expect to be college graduates or obtain advanced degrees compared with 41.5 percent of Black youth and 45.6 percent of White youth.

- Expectation of educational attainment varies among Hispanic subgroups. Cubans have much higher educational expectations than do Chicanos or Puerto Ricans (see Chart 10).

CHART 10

SCHOOLING YOU THINK YOU WILL GET

Level	% Mex.Amer/ Chicanos	% Cuban	% Puerto Rican	% Latin American
Below High School	1.1	0.7	1.1	1.0
High School Graduate	23.5	12.1	26.6	26.4
Voc. Ed. Less than 2 years	9.1	3.3	8.0	7.6
Voc. Ed. More than 2 years	14.9	7.6	14.3	10.6
College, Less than 2 years	4.5	4.9	3.9	4.2
College 2 years +	13.4	16.5	11.6	13.4
College Graduate	19.0	22.1	15.8	20.0
Master's	8.6	17.2	11.2	7.2
Ph.D., MD or Adv. Degree	6.1	15.6	7.5	9.5

SOURCE: High School and Beyond, 1980.

- Although 52.9 percent of the Hispanic high school seniors surveyed plan to go to college the year after they graduate (see Chart 11) (an additional 12.7 percent plan to go after one or more years) only 36.9 percent felt they definitely have the ability to complete college, as compared with 49.6 percent of Blacks and 48.5 percent of Whites (see Chart 12).

CHART 11

PLAN TO GO TO COLLEGE IN THE FUTURE

When	% of Hispanics	% of Blacks	% of Whites
Next Year	52.9	59.3	59.5
After 1 Year	8.4	8.0	6.9
After 2 or more Years	4.3	4.3	2.0
Don't Know	12.9	13.3	10.0
No	21.4	15.1	20.5

SOURCE: High School and Beyond, 1980.

CHART 12

DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO COMPLETE COLLEGE?

Response	% of Hispanics	% of Blacks	% of Whites
Yes, Definitely	36.9	49.6	48.5
Yes, Probably	34.6	30.9	32.6
Not Sure	21.3	14.1	12.9
I Doubt It	4.3	3.2	3.7
No, Definitely	2.8	2.1	2.3

SOURCE: High School and Beyond, 1980.

- Among Hispanic Americans, Mexican American/Chicano youth were significantly less likely than other subgroups to indicate certainty of ability to complete college (see Chart 13).

CHART 13

ABILITY TO COMPLETE COLLEGE - BY HISPANIC SUBGROUP

Response	% Mexican American	% Cuban	% Puerto Rican	% Latin American
Yes, Definitely	33.0	50.8	46.4	38.1
Yes, Probably	37.3	33.5	27.0	32.4
Not Sure	22.4	10.1	19.1	22.4
I Doubt It	4.7	5.4	1.6	4.3
No, Definitely	2.6	0.2	5.8	2.8

SOURCE: High School and Beyond, 1980.

V. TYPE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SOUGHT

- Of those students planning to go to college, 52.7 percent Hispanic students plan to attend a two-year college, compared to 39.5 percent of Blacks and 47.0 percent Whites.

- More Hispanic than Black or White students also plan to attend college part-time. 44.2 percent of Hispanics intend to attend part-time compared to 32.6 percent of Black and 34.1 percent of Whites.

- Although 52.9 percent of Hispanic students indicated that they plan to attend college in the next year, only 20 percent of those students had taken the SAT as compared with 37 percent of Blacks, and 40.5 percent of Whites.

- Additionally, only 47.9 percent of Hispanics had applied for admission to one or more colleges as compared with 62.7 percent of Blacks and 64.6 percent of Whites.

  - The low percentage of Hispanic students who had taken SATs and applied to colleges may be partly due to the fact that community colleges often do not require such tests and some do not require as much advance time in applications. Most Hispanic students plan to attend such colleges.

- Most Hispanic youth who had applied to college had applied only to one school, while most Black and White youth had applied to several.

VI. LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF HISPANIC CHILDREN

A. Problems with Data on Limited English Proficient Children

1. Good information on the language characteristics and abilities of Hispanic children is difficult to come by. Some of these difficulties are due to the same types of data-collection and reporting problems as for other types of information about Hispanics. Some result from the fact that different surveys collect different pieces of information about language characteristics, and even when they purport to collect the same information, the definitions they employ are often different.

   For example, information on the language background and characteristics of Hispanics has been collected for:

   - Language Minority Persons
   - Non-English Language Background (NELB)
   - Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE)
   - Limited and Non-English Speaking Ability (LESA, NESA)
   - Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
   - Non-English Language Spoken in Home

2. Definitions of a Limited English Proficient Child - Even when the definition is narrowed to those children of limited English proficiency (LEP), there is no standardized definition used in all districts, States, or studies.

- The wide variance in the estimates of the numbers of limited English proficient children results primarily from the widely different definitions used to identify a limited English proficient child.

- Although states and local districts have the flexibility to define students of limited English proficiency in different manners, the primary federal program focusing on limited English proficient children (Title VII) defines a limited English proficient child as one who has:

  "...sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language to deny such individuals the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English."

- Currently, the only study estimating the numbers of limited English proficient children and using the definition contained in this legislation is the Children's English and Services Study.

- There are a variety of methods and testing instruments used to identify and assess the proficiency of those limited in English. The Office of Civil Rights' Lau Compliance plans revealed that the following instruments (together with locally constructed instruments — usually not field tested) were used most frequently to assess language proficiency:

  - Language Assessment Scales
  - Language Assessment Battery
  - Bilinual Syntax Measure
  - San Diego Language Observation and Assessment Instrument
  - Basic Inventory of Natural Language
  - Primary Acquisition of Language

- Some districts assess a child's proficiency based on tests alone, some on interviews only, or teacher/parent classification. Some use a combination of methods.

  - Unfortunately, some schools do not assess the proficiency of all LEP children in order to determine what might be the best type of special instruction for the children. The Children's

English and Services Study (CESS)[19] found that as recently as 1978, only 56 percent of the children the CESS identified as LEP had been assessed for English language proficiency. The CESS used a proficiency instrument known as the Measure of English Language Proficiency (MELP) which was specially designed to assess proficiency based on the definition of a LEP child contained in the Title VII legislation.

- Limited English Speaking Ability vs. Limited English Proficiency - Congress in 1978 amended the previous definition of eligible students for Title VII programs which had focused on limited ability to speak English as the major criterion for identifying students for inclusion in Title VII programs.

  - English speaking ability in isolation may not measure a child's full extent of proficiency in English or his/her ability to learn successfully in an English-only medium classroom without special assistance.

  - The 1978 amendments focus on speaking, understanding, reading and writing ability and the ability of the child to learn successfully.

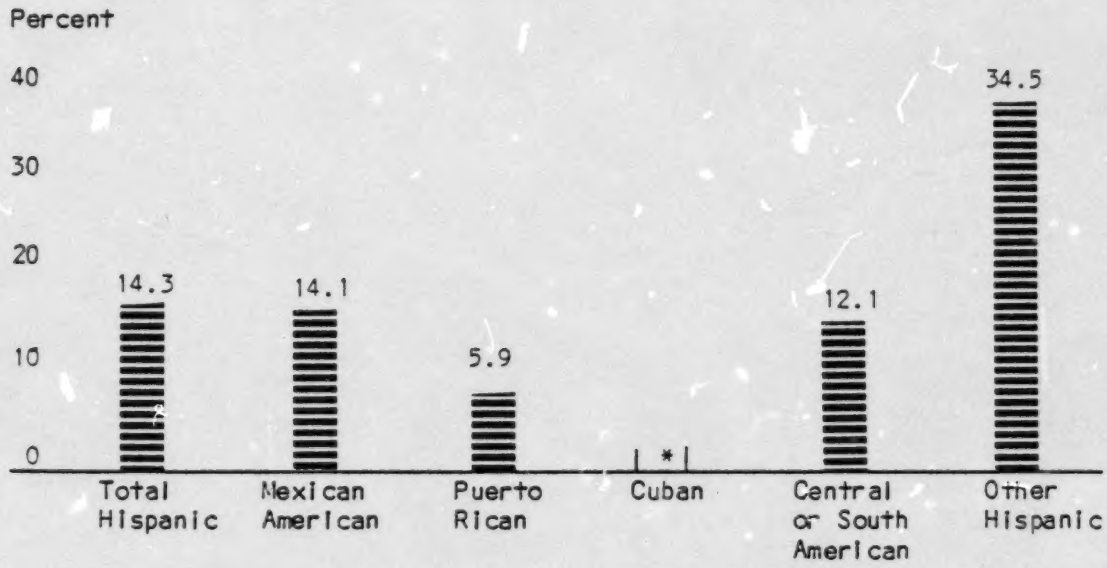
  - Some studies have pointed out that mere teacher or parent classification of a child by observed English speaking ability and/or frequency of English use is not necessarily a valid measure of proficiency. The CESS study, for example, found that 72 percent of children identified as speaking very well, or well, were in fact LEP children when tested.[20]

B. Numbers of Language Minority Persons

- A language minority person is defined as a person of any age whose usual or second household language is not English, or if over 14 years of age, whose mother tongue is other than English, whether or not they usually speak English (also termed non-English language background). Information gathered by the Survey of Income and Education in 1976[21] indicated that only 14.3 percent of Hispanics are of English background, although there is substantial variation by Hispanic subgroup. (see Chart 14)

CHART 14

PERCENT OF HISPANICS WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND



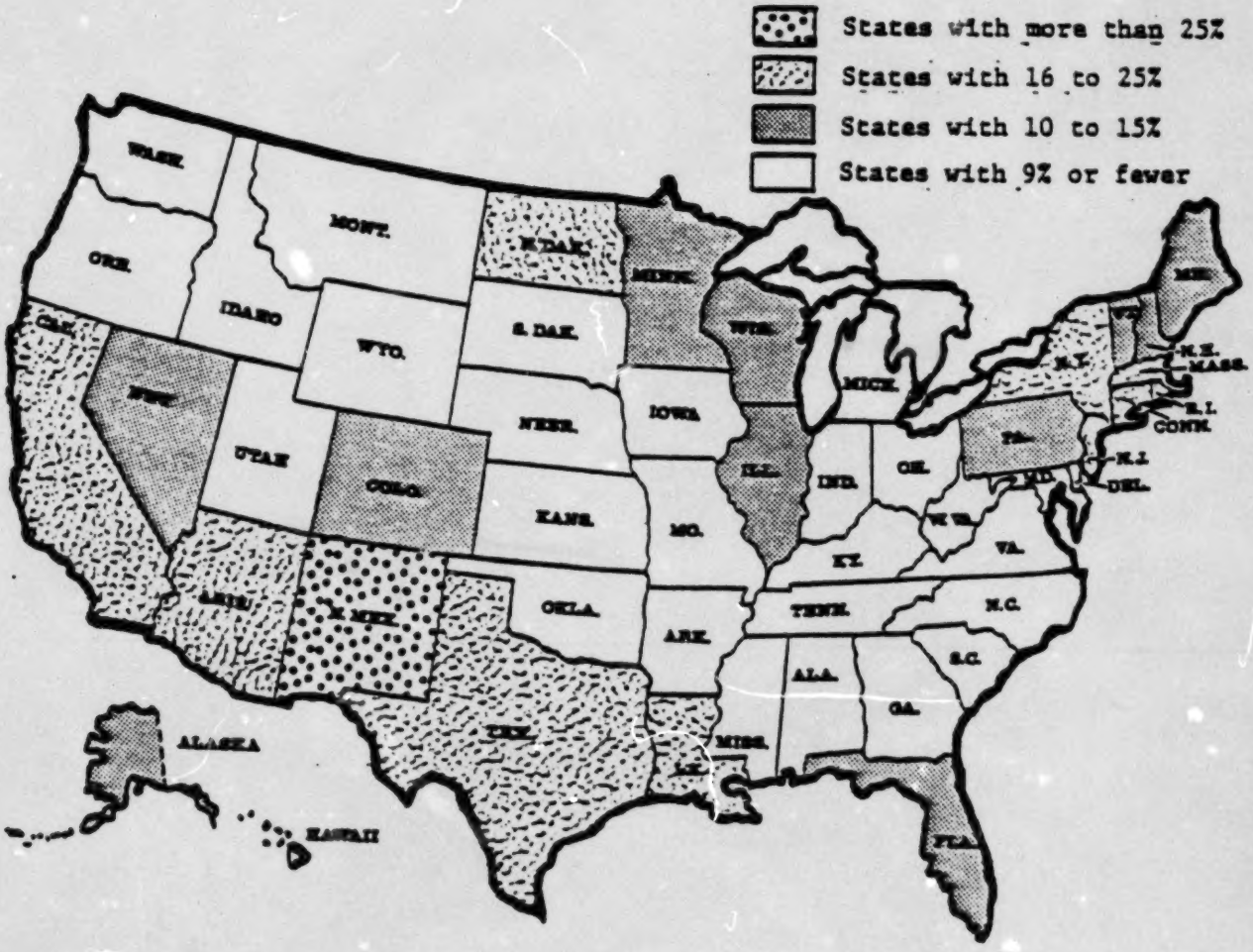
*Percent not shown where estimate is less than 20,000 persons.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, Place of Birth and Language Characteristics of Persons of Hispanic Origin in the United States, Spring 1976, No. 78-135 (SIE Data)

- A 1981 study by Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc., concluded that 90 percent of U.S. Hispanics speak Spanish and that 43 percent speak only enough English to get by.22
- Five million school-aged children are language minority children.
- Four-fifths of these children are native born.
- 80 percent of Hispanic Americans live in households where Spanish is spoken.
- One in ten school children ages 16-18 have a non-English language background.
- 60 percent of these children have a Spanish language background.23

Spanish language background persons are located in all regions and states. However, three out of five located in the five states of the Southwest (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas). These five states plus New York, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey account for 90 percent of Spanish language background individuals. (see Map)

SPANISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND PERSONS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STATE POPULATION



- Although information on the non-English language background of Hispanics does not provide much insight into the extent of English language proficiency, non-English language background does affect Hispanic students.

  - The National Center for Education Statistics in 1980 reported that Hispanics from a non-English language background were more than three times as likely as Hispanics from an English language background to drop out of school.[24]

- Most studies have estimated that about 60-70 percent of limited English proficient students are Hispanic. Since most studies use Census Bureau projections as to the number of Hispanic Americans, and preliminary information from the 1980 Census indicates that there are significantly more Hispanics than Census had initially projected, for Hispanic children some of these figures may be undercounts.

- Additionally, no data are available about the children of undocumented workers.

- Neither are data available about the children of recent refugees and immigrants from Southeast Asia, the Caribbean or Central America.

C. Limited English Proficient Children

1. Current Numbers and Characteristics of LEP Population

   - In the Spring of 1978, the National Institute of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics conducted the Children's English and Services Study (CESS)25 to determine the number of language minority children with limited English proficiency. The CESS is the only instrument which has included a language proficiency measure rather than relying solely on the opinion of a household respondent or teacher. The CESS is also the only study which defines limited English proficient children in a manner consistent with Title VII legislation.

     Findings from the CESS study indicate that:

     - Limited English proficiency is more prevalent among children living in households where Spanish is spoken.

.. Limited English proficiency is more prevalent in California, New York and Texas as contrasted with the rest of the country. (see Chart 15)

CHART 15

NUMBERS OF LEP CHILDREN BY SELECTED STATE

State	Number of LEP Children Ages 5-14	% LEP Among Children 5-14 in household where non-English is spoken
California	594,000	70%
New York	468,000	77%
Texas	438,000	70%
Rest of U.S.	908,000	53%
TOTAL	2,408,000	63%

SOURCE: Children's English and Services Study, 1978

.. There are 1.7 million Spanish language background children aged 5-14 with limited English proficiency.

.. Approximately 73 percent of children 5-14 living in homes where Spanish was spoken are limited in English proficiency.

.. The study identified an estimated 2.4 million limited English proficient children between 5-14 and an additional 1.2 million also of school age, thus the study estimated that there are 3.6 million school age children of limited English proficiency.

2. Projected Increase in LEP Population

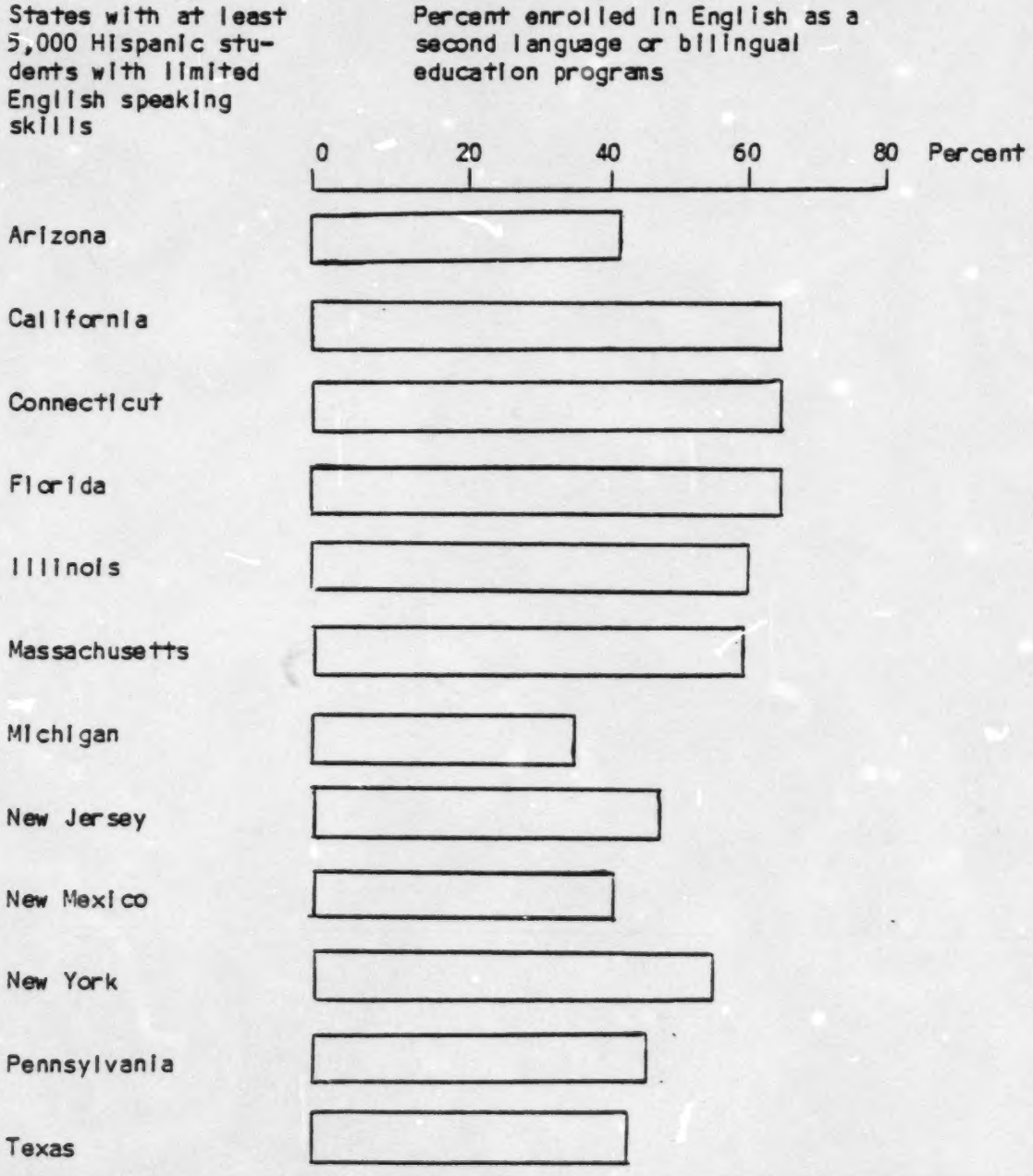
. The numbers of Spanish language background limited English proficient children are projected to increase from 1.7 million to 2.6 million by the year 2000.[26]

D. Services Available to LEP Children

. Even in those States with the greatest numbers of limited English proficiency, only one-third to two-thirds of Hispanic LEP children received special instruction. This special instruction includes bilingual programs or ESL.[27] (see Chart 16)

CHART 16

MEETING THE NEEDS OF HISPANIC CHILDREN
WITH LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS



SOURCE: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Civil Rights, State and National Summaries of Data Colected by the 1976 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey, 1978

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